

down, Burgh Heath, Epsom Common, Bookham Common, Walton Heath, Westcott, Epsom Downs, Albury Downs; and at Benfleet, Essex.

I have not yet found definite proof that this species is double-brooded; emergences I have had from 30th June to 8th August of first year.

I have included localities in this paper at the request of several friends.

REFERENCES.

- (1) Niblett, M. Some Notes on British *Trypetidae*, *Ent. Rec.*, 1934.
- (2) Niblett, M. *Trypeta (Orellia) winthemi*, Mg., *Ibid.*, 1934.
- (3) Niblett, M. British *Trypetidae*, additional notes, *Ibid.*, 1936.
- (4) Niblett, M. British Gall-causing *Trypetidae*, *Ibid.*, 1940.

SOME REMARKS ON THE SPECIFIC NAMES OF SOME OF THE EUROPEAN EREBIAS.

By the Rev. GEORGE WHEELER, M.A., F.R.E.S.

As I was wanting some information with regard to *Erebia stygne*, I naturally turned at once to Warren's magnificent monograph of the genus, feeling confident that I should find all I could possibly want. The whole work is a monument of patient investigation and scientific insight, as instanced by the author's new grouping of the species, and beyond all by his theory of the evolution of the androconial scales, which opens up a new point of investigation with, I anticipate, far-reaching results. And then the skill with which the genitalia have been prepared and the excellence of the illustrations are astonishing, and (as I had pointed out some years ago was necessary to make such illustrations intelligible) all taken in the same direction from the same point of view.

With all these excellencies I anticipated no difficulty in arriving at the information I wanted, but alas! on looking for *stygne* in the list of species, 391-399, no such name was to be discovered! In addition to *stygne* I looked in vain in the index for any one of the following universally recognised names: *evias*, *nerine*, *lappona*, *arete*, *glacialis*, *ceto*, *goante*; so I had to search through the body of the work (no mean task) to find out under what headings to look for information about any of these species. *Glacialis* was easily found under *pluto* (though whatever de Prunner's *pluto* may have been it could not be *glacialis* as I will presently show), but the others were not so easy to find. The first name under which I found *stygne* was *nerine*, but this proved to be an exclusively Asiatic species, so a further search was necessary, and it was eventually found under *meoluns* near the end of the book; in the same way *evias* was eventually found masquerading as *triarius*, *nerine* as *stirius*, *lappona* as *pandrose*, *arete* as *claudina*, *ceto* as *alberganus*, and *goante* as *montanus*.

How easy it would have been to save all this unnecessary trouble by adding the usually recognised name in brackets in the index after the name used in the body of the book.

No doubt the author had satisfied himself as to the species de Prunner was describing, but, in order that the names so identified should be

accepted for general use, it would be necessary to prove that de Prunner must have meant the species with which the author identified the descriptions, and that he could not possibly have meant anything else; for nothing short of absolute certainty would suffice to displace names universally recognised. But has he proved this? Most assuredly not. Take for example *evias*. The outstanding peculiarity of this species is the triple eyespot at the apex of the forewing. Does de Prunner's original description of *triarius* mention this? At the first glance one might suppose that it did, but on reading it the "three white-pupilled spots joined together" are found to be on the hindwing, and no reference is made to the outstanding characteristic of *evias*; there can therefore be no sufficient reason for this identification, or even a probability of its being correct, and there is certainly no reason why *triarius* should displace *evias*, and *evias* it must remain. Take *ceto* again. The special characteristic of this species is the elongated form of the spots. Not a word is said of this in de Prunner's description of *alberganus*, so why should we be expected to regard this description as necessarily, or even probably, referring to *ceto*? Again, *ceto* must remain *ceto*. With regard to *pluto*, the description might quite well refer to the black form of *glacialis*, but de Prunner says that his *pluto* is found at the end of May and in June! Now I will defy anybody to find any form of *glacialis* at the end of May, and I doubt whether it could be found even in the Basses Alpes in June, so one can only say that de Prunner has gone wrong somewhere, and that we don't know to what species his name refers; the dates would not, for instance, suit for the black form of *manto*, but might do for the black form of *oeme*, but certainly not with the absolute certainty required to displace a name universally recognised. The question of *meolans* for *stygne* is not so instantly disposed of, but having been carefully through the various possible species I fail to find anything which really corresponds with de Prunner's description. Some ♀ specimens of *medusa* come nearest to it in certain respects and specimens of *melampus* in others, but I can find no specimen of *stygne* which even approximately resembles it, even among specimens from its lower habitats; the mountain forms (and de Prunner says his species came from the mountains) are conspicuous for the absence of the "broad ochraceous band" on the upper side of the forewings, and indeed do not show a broad ochraceous band on any wing, upper or underside. The number of eyespots is in most species so variable that it can rarely be relied on as a distinguishing character. There is certainly nothing to give any probability, let alone certainty, that *meolans* represents *stygne*, and like *evias* and *ceto* the position of *stygne* remains unshaken. With regard to *montanus* for *goante* the case is different, being complicated by Hübner's *scoea*. De Prunner's descriptions so far have been so inadequate and so uncertain in their application that they have most wisely been generally disregarded, but in the case of *montanus* his description is much more certain than usual, and seems sufficient to displace not only Esper's *goante* but also Hübner's *scoea*, under the unfortunate "rules," which also uphold *claudina* against *arete*, though the latter is the earlier name, but was there any reason for bringing in the homonym rule in this case? With regard to *pandrose* for *lappona* it is rather surprising that Borkhausen's name has been so long overlooked in the intensive search for possible altera-

tions of accepted names. That Godart's *stirius* also refers to *nerine* seems certain.

I am quite tired of pointing out, what I should have thought obvious to any one, that unrestricted use of a priority rule is the surest possible way of securing instability in nomenclature, because an older name may be dug out at any time, and in some cases would upset not only the name of one species but of others dependent on it. How easy it would have been to insist on two general exceptions by enacting (1) "a generally (or universally) accepted name can never be displaced by the discovery of an older one," and (2) (still more important) "under no circumstances can a name generally recognised as belonging to our species be transferred to another." The instability caused by the present rules could hardly have a more striking example than the fact that at this late date an attempt has been made to displace eight generally accepted names in a single genus. It is bad enough when inevitable, but surely need never come into play because somebody thinks that a certain description applies to a certain species, least of all when it is generally taken to apply to another. Surely it is allowed by all sane people that the real reason for giving a name to anything is in order that one person may know what another is speaking (or writing) about, but this constant changing of names in accordance with this ridiculous code has no effect but that of making either past or present writing unintelligible, and in all probability making both past and present unintelligible in the future.

STENOPTILIA SAXIFRAGAE, FLETCHER, IN IRELAND.

By BRYAN P. BEIRNE, B.Sc., F.R.E.S.

This interesting species was described as new by Mr T. Bainbrigge Fletcher in the March number of this journal. I first noticed the moth flying abundantly around saxifrage in the evening in a garden at Ballsbridge, Dublin, in 1934, and subsequently found it wherever I looked for it in gardens in County Dublin, at Rathgar, Harold's Cross, Shankill, and Seapoint. All these localities, with the exception of Shankill which is to the south of the county near the Wicklow border, are in the southern suburbs of Dublin. I have not looked for it to the north of the city but it probably occurs there, as I have no doubt that it occurs everywhere in gardens in and around Dublin, where it is by far the commonest species of plume. Its range, as far as it is known at present, appears to be the same as that of *Mnesipatris flicivora*, Meyr.

The moth apparently hides in the foliage of mossy saxifrage and neighbouring plants during the day and may be most easily captured while at rest on the saxifrage shoots in the evening between about 6 and 8 o'clock. It flies in the late evening until after dark and the males come freely to light. Last summer, 1939, it was considerably less common than in previous years, but this was probably due to the general unfavourableness of the season. Mr A. W. Stelfox, of the National Museum, Dublin, has a large number of mossy saxifrages in his garden at Harold's Cross, where the moth occurs very commonly. These saxifrages, which include most of the native Irish varieties, he brought from the north of Ireland about twenty years ago, and he informs me that